

## Year of events mark heroine's centenary



*Emily Davison's great great great niece Lauren Caisley seen laying flowers on her grave as part of a church service at St Mary's Church, Morpeth, held as part of International Women's Day.*

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MORPETH Suffragette Emily Wilding Davison will be remembered in a year of events to commemorate the centenary of her death.

Miss Davison was held up as a martyr for the cause of women's rights after tragically losing her life following a protest at the Epsom Derby in 1913.

The fearless campaigner ran onto the course to try to pin the Suffragette colours onto the King's horse, but was struck by the animal and suffered horrific injuries, dying four days later in hospital.

Her body was brought back to her hometown of Morpeth and thousands lined the route from the station to St Mary's Church, where her funeral took place and she was laid to rest in the churchyard.

Today, the Emily Wilding Davison Working Group, made up of various local organisations and individuals with an interest in the Suffragette, is tasked with keeping her memory alive.

And various plans are in the pipeline to commemorate the 100th anniversary of her death next year, with suggestions of a procession, church service, concert and even a play.

Moves are also under way to work in partnership with the Epsom community.

Group Chairman Andrew Tebbutt said: "The plans are to arrange a series of activities, starting with International Women's Day in March. Obviously in Morpeth that is usually centred around Emily Wilding Davison, though not exclusively, so it will be the same again, but that will be the start of a number of events.

"I need to emphasise that at this stage a lot of it is provisional, but we are hopeful that we are going to do these things."

The Morpeth Northumbrian Gathering Committee has already decided to adopt the anniversary as one of its main themes next year and Morpeth Town Council and Northumberland County Council will ensure that the town's floral displays reflect the Suffragette colours of purple, white and green.

Werca's Folk women's choir is leading the plans for a memorial concert in Miss Davison's honour, and the working group is also looking into the possibility of commissioning a play about the activist, with

hopes of staging it at Morpeth Riverside Leisure Centre.

On the anniversary of her funeral, Saturday, June 15, the group aims to recreate the procession from Morpeth Railway Station to St Mary's, with onlookers encouraged to dress in Suffragette fashions. The march will be followed by a service of commemoration and afterwards flowers and wreaths will be laid on Miss Davison's grave.

It is expected that many descendants of the Suffragette's family will attend, including the head of the clan Geoffrey Davison.

Local historian and genealogist Maureen Howes, who has been researching Miss Davison and her family for the last ten years, is working on a book about her, using previously unpublished family archives, which she hopes to release in time for the centenary.

And American academic Carolyn Collett, who has published a book on Miss Davison's writings, is also likely to be involved in the events.

The working group will try to set up projects between Morpeth and Epsom schools about the Suffragette, and already links have been forged with Epsom Downs Racecourse, whose Managing Director Rupert Trevelyan has links with Wallington, near Cambo.

Talks are ongoing to have a commemorative plaque erected near Tattenham Corner at the course, where Miss Davison was struck, and it could even be unveiled on Ladies' Day before the Derby.

"We are in detailed discussion with Epsom Racecourse, where Emily tried to pin the colours on the horse, and there are provisional plans for a plaque to be put at Tattenham Corner because there is nothing currently there to commemorate where Emily was fatally injured," said Mr Tebbutt.

"Mr Trevelyan came up in 2011 and we will talk later in the year. He is even talking about putting up the plaque during Ladies' Day on the Friday of the Derby meeting and perhaps trying to get the crowds to dress up in Suffragette style.

"If it comes off it will be fantastic."

The working group is made up of representatives of Northumberland County Council, Morpeth Town Council, the Greater Morpeth Development Trust, Morpeth Antiquarian Society, Morpeth Soroptimists, Business and Professional Women's Guild and Werca's Folk, as well as individuals, such as Mrs Howes, who represents the Davison family.

Mr Tebbutt said: "It is not an exclusive group and anyone can join. It is a big working group, but people will drop in and out depending on what is happening and where their interest lies.

"We are still having conversations about what exactly we are going to do for the centenary anniversary and how we will get to do the various things."

Beamish and Woodhorn Museums have also offered their support with the events.

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